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Teacher perceptions of including students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic courses at the secondary level

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Teacher Perceptions of Including Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities in Non-
Academic Courses at the Secondary Level

Action Thesis Submitted on the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

California State University, Monterey Bay

Spring 2011

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Academic Courses at the Secondary Level

By: Samuel T. Sauer

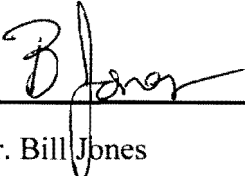
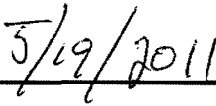
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Abstract

This project focuses on the teacher perceptions of including students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic courses at the secondary level. This study utilizes data collected through five teacher interviews to determine how teachers perceive the inclusion process. Elements of the inclusion process including: paraprofessional support, teacher training, impacts on general education students, social benefits, and accommodations were taken into consideration during the research process. Teachers selected for this study were currently teaching an elective course where students with moderate to severe disabilities were being included. The research uncovers factors such as paraprofessional support and educational strategies that may contribute to a successful inclusion program as well as teacher concerns and issues involving student safety that need to be addressed in the future.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Question	8
Limitations	8
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	9
Search Procedures.....	10
Criteria for Selection	10
Need for Inclusion	10
Effectiveness of Inclusion.....	12
Perceptions of General Educators.....	13
Summary	14
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	16
Setting	16
Participants.....	16
Data Collection	17
Data Analysis	18
Coding.....	18
Themes	19
Chapter 4: Results and Discussion	20
Paraprofessional Support.....	20
Teacher Training.....	22
Impact on General Education Students	23
Social Benefits for Students with Disabilities	25
Student Accommodations	27
Teacher Concerns	28
Inclusion Model.....	29
Summary	30
Chapter 5: Summary.....	33

Implications	35
Recommendations	36
References	37
Appendix A	39
Interview #1.....	40
Interview #2.....	44
Interview #3.....	47
Interview #4.....	51
Interview #5.....	55
Appendix B	59
Student Profile.....	60
Interview Protocol.....	61

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a nationwide push for the inclusion of students with disabilities. This demand is not limited to students with mild disabilities and is certainly not content area specific. Instead, students with all levels of exceptionalities are included in all aspects of their school day. For example, educators and parents are not selecting students to be included in just English and Mathematic courses. Instead, they are looking to include students for the entirety of their school day. Students with mild to moderate disabilities are no longer the only students targeted for inclusion. Now students with even the most severe disabilities are being included in the general education setting.

At the secondary level this can be exceptionally challenging. The daunting task of coordinating staff, from both general and special education, providing supports within the classroom, and properly training staff and personnel in the methods of effective instruction play a role in the success of the inclusion process. Furthermore, once all of those issues are ironed out, additional issues begin to emerge. One in particular is the acceptance and perceptions the educators themselves have of the students with disabilities within their classrooms. Of all the factors related to the success of inclusion, teacher attitude, teacher training and understanding of collaboration is arguably the most important (Short & Martin, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

With all of the staffing and scheduling issues aside, the real issue holding the success of the inclusion process hostage revolves around the perception of inclusion from educators in the general education setting. Short and Martin 2005 went on to say, “And the largest obstacle to inclusion appears to be the attitude of teachers” (page 1). Of course it would not be fair to

pigeonhole all general educators as the sole obstacle to inclusion. In fact, there are countless educators who embrace students with special needs and who are open to the idea of inclusion. General education teachers can be challenged by the diversity of learning needs and behaviors that students with disabilities bring to the classroom. Teachers who are not properly trained to deal with these issues may find themselves in unfamiliar territory.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to obtain the perceptions of teachers with students with moderate to severe disabilities in their non-academic (elective) courses. Using a qualitative research approach, this study will utilize teacher interviews to investigate the teacher perceptions of students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic classroom settings.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of general education teachers towards the inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities within their classrooms? What are the perceptions of general education teachers regarding the training they have received to work with students who have disabilities? How do general education teachers feel inclusion impacts the general education students within the classroom?

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this research that should be considered when analyzing the reliability of the findings. First, the research will be limited to one school site. Second, the research will only analyze the perceptions of teachers in non-academic (elective) courses. Lastly, the research will only include a small percentage of teachers at this school and should not be viewed as the overall perception of inclusion of the entire school staff.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Inclusion is not a new idea in the field of special education. Issues surrounding the effectiveness and proper implementation of inclusionary programs have been a constant battle amongst teachers, administrators, lawmakers, and parents (Zigmond, 2003). Few studies have been conducted to date that investigate the effect of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Hunt & Goetz, 1997). With the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, the push for full inclusion has been on the rise. At this time, there is a need for more research to determine the effectiveness of full inclusion for students with moderate to severe disabilities in secondary education (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Current research surrounding this topic does not identify one particular place as the best location for students with disabilities to learn. In fact, current research finds equal progress is being made by students with disabilities across a multitude of settings (e.g., self-contained classrooms, inclusive settings, resource, etc.) (Zigmond).

The purpose of this literature review is to examine current research on the topic of inclusion at the secondary level. More specifically, the review will focus on research in the area of teacher perceptions of secondary students with disabilities included in the general education setting. Current research surrounding the issue of teacher perceptions of students with disabilities in the general education classroom will be examined. Through the review of current and past research, the hope is to gain a better understanding of the needs of students with moderate to severe disabilities. The research will also aim to better understand the perceptions of general education teachers who have students with moderate to severe disabilities included within their classrooms.

Search Procedures

A comprehensive search using two computerized databases was administered. The databases used were Academic Search Elite and Education Resources Information Center. The following descriptors were used: (a) inclusion, (b) secondary education, (c) high school, (d) severe disabilities, (e) mental retardation, (f) strategies, (g) acceptance, (h) special education, (i) mainstreaming, (j) teacher perceptions, (k) teacher acceptance and (l) general education. These words/phrases were used independently and/or combined to increase success while looking through select databases. Also, additional sources were discovered using the references found at the end of the chosen articles.

Criteria for Selection

Studies were selected for this review if: (a) the article was published between 1995 and 2009, (b) the participants were students with moderate/severe disabilities, (c) the study was relevant to the topic under review, (d) the purpose of the study was to examine inclusion in secondary education, teacher perspectives of inclusion, (e) the participants were educators discussing their opinion of inclusion, (f) the students participating in the study were receiving educational services at the secondary level. Studies were omitted from this review if: (a) the participants did not include students with disabilities, (b) the setting was not a secondary or inclusion environment, and (c) the article was not relevant to the selected topics of interest.

Need for Inclusion

Students in the general education setting follow specific state and federally mandated core content standards throughout their education. The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 mandated that the IEP goals of students in special education are aligned with the same core content standards as their peers in general education. IDEA states that a single set of standards is

developed for “all” students (Angran et al., 2002). This would require students, in both general and special education, to work towards the same academic goals regardless of the educational placement.

The evaluation of an educational program calls for the needs of students to come first in the decision making process. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) calls for “all students” to receive a free and appropriate public education. The term “appropriate” however, varies from student to student. When considering the education of students with moderate to severe disabilities, the term “appropriate” can be interpreted a number of ways.

When determining the appropriate placement for students with disabilities, grouping students solely by disability labels is not recommended. Instead, individualize the unique needs of each student and determine their placement accordingly (Wolfe & Hall, 2003). All students in special education, regardless of their disability, have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) created specifically for them. It is the job of the IEP team (general and special education teachers, parents, student, administrators, and service providers) to make educational decisions and determine the appropriate environment where the student in question should receive services (Wolfe & Hall). Considering the research evidence to date, it is clear that placement is most effective when the placement supports the needs of the student so that he/she will be able to achieve the individual objectives and goals set forth by the IEP team. For example, if the students’ goals are to learn content subject information or how to interact with nondisabled peers, the general education setting is the best placement for that particular student (Zigmond, 2003).

Effectiveness of Inclusion

Zigmond (2003) noted that it is not the place that makes special education “special” or effective. Instead, it is the effective teaching strategies and individualized approach that are the key components of special education. Collaboration between educators involved in the education of students with disabilities is vital to ensure the success of an inclusional program. Literature on the topic of inclusion suggests that when special and general education teachers share knowledge about teaching strategies when planning it leads to more effective instruction (Wolfe & Hall, 2003). Effective inclusion does not include a number of strategies added onto overall mediocre teaching competence. In areas where inclusion was particularly effective, it was clear that the teacher began with effective teaching skills (Mastropoeri & Scruggs, 2001).

Past inclusional practices have placed students with disabilities into general education settings with the primary focus on social integration. However, solely focusing on the social development of a particular student negates the opportunity for the “included” student to receive instruction in core content areas (Wolfe & Hall, 2003). Likewise, similar to the sole focus on functional curriculum, implementation of a narrow, core academic content-focused general curriculum may result in less time directed towards more functional, but still critical, areas (Angran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002). Once a student has been placed in the appropriate educational setting, researchers recommend the curriculum promote independence and work towards the development of skills that will allow the individual to achieve the highest possible quality of life (Angran et al.). If the placement does not accomplish the above criteria, then an alternative placement or reevaluation of the placement may need to be conducted. Furthermore, when considering the appropriateness of a students’ educational placement, it is the job of the IEP team to determine whether the curriculum in place will produce successful and meaningful

outcomes for the student in question in addition to meeting the needs of his or her IEP goals and objectives (Angran et al.).

Perceptions of General Educators

Once a student has been appropriately placed in an inclusive environment there are further issues to be resolved. Since the introduction of inclusional programs, secondary-level educators have shown a less than positive attitude towards the idea (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). Special educators ranked resistance from general educators as one of the primary barriers for placing students in general education environments (Angran et al., 2002). General education teachers have expressed compelling concerns over class size, increasingly diverse students, lack of training, and insufficient supports to sustain students with disabilities in their classrooms (Angran et al.). The ultimate success of mainstreaming/inclusion efforts, then, may well depend on the extent to which supports are made available to general education teachers (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). General education teachers are willing to make adaptations and/or modifications within the classroom but tend to make instructional adaptations in response to students' persistent failure to learn. These adaptations are usually geared toward the group, not to the individuals with disabilities (Zigmond, 2003).

Throughout the research, constant themes tend to arise with regards to general education teachers and inclusion. Unlike special educators, general educators are not trained to work intensely with one individual or a small group of individuals (Zigmond, 2003). Without the support of general education teachers, it will be virtually impossible to produce systematic change (Angran et al., 2002).

Research shows that when general education teachers received assistance in mastering the skills required to implement an innovation such as inclusion, they became more committed to

the change as their effort and skill increased (Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995).

Furthermore, with assistance and support from special education staff, general education teachers gradually begin to make both physical and social contact with the special education students in their classes, learn how to include the students with disabilities in class activities, and develop a “sense of ownership” for the students (Janney et al.)

In 2002, Angran, Alper, & Wehmeyer published the results of a study involving two-hundred educators. The educators were required to complete a questionnaire filled with questions surrounding the educating of students with severe disabilities. The authors of the study felt it was worth mentioning that a majority of the respondents did not believe that access to the general education curriculum is appropriate for students with severe disabilities and that these students should not be held accountable to the same performance standards as their typical peers.

Summary

There is no simple and straightforward answer to the question of where students with disabilities should receive their educational instruction. The research provides no compelling evidence that “place” is the critical factor in the academic or social progress of students with disabilities (Zigmond, 2003). Clearly, more research is needed to increase understanding of the basis for resistance from general educators and how to alleviate their concerns about access to the general education environment for students with moderate to severe disabilities. General education teachers faced for the first time with the prospect of integrating a student having a moderate or severe disability into their classrooms will naturally respond with a bit of resistance. However, this resistance should be viewed as a natural part of the change process, rather than as an indication that the change will be impossible to accomplish (Janney et al., 1995).

Overall, it seems clear that many teachers have reservations or concerns about inclusion and believe that substantial support is necessary to enable these efforts to succeed. The ultimate success of mainstreaming/inclusion efforts, then, may well depend on the extent to which such supports are made available (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of the inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic (elective) courses. Using a qualitative approach, this research utilized teacher interviews to investigate the teacher perceptions of students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic classroom settings.

Setting

This study was conducted at a local high school located in an agricultural community with a population of approximately 50,000 residents. The population of the high school was approximately 2,600 students: about 70 percent Hispanic, 20 percent White, 6 percent Asian, and about 4 percent African American. The teachers within the setting of study were teachers in non-academic (elective) classrooms that included students with moderate to severe disabilities. More specifically, the teachers selected worked in the following classrooms: woodshop, sculpture & design, drawing & painting, and ceramics.

Participants

The participants of this study were teachers at the local high school who were teaching in any non-academic (elective) classrooms that included students with moderate to severe disabilities. More specifically, the teachers selected for this research worked in the following classrooms: woodshop, sculpture & design, drawing & painting, and ceramics. Furthermore, teachers selected to participate in the study had students with special needs enrolled in their course(s). The disability level of the students within the selected inclusive classrooms fell within

the moderate/severe range with varying disability labels (i.e. specific learning disability, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, etc.). Five teacher participants were included in the data collection process. Teachers chosen to participate in the research included only teachers at the local high school who taught non-academic (elective) courses and had students mainstreamed in their class. Of the five teachers interviewed, all but one of the teachers has been working in the field of education for more than ten years. The teacher with the least amount of experience in education has been teaching for a total of four years. All of the teachers had who participated had worked in an inclusion program for a minimum of three years. The teacher sample included a fairly even amount of both male and female teachers. The distribution of teacher gender was two males and three females.

Data Collection

A total of seven teachers were offered the opportunity to participate during the data collection process. Out of the seven teachers invited to participate, five teachers agreed to participate. Data was collected through teacher interviews. The teacher interviews lasted approximately 10-15 minutes each, and were conducted by myself as the primary researcher. The interviews included a list of pre-scripted questions developed prior to the interview. The same questions were used for each teacher interview to maintain consistency throughout the data collection process. At the end of each interview, the teachers were given the opportunity to add any additional information not covered during the formal interview that he/she felt was important. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for better accuracy.

Each of the teachers interviewed were asked to consider the following questions: 1) How do you perceive the inclusion process? 2) What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities? 3) What training have you received to help you

better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom? 4) How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class? 5) How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience? 6) What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom? Probing questions were also included throughout the interview process in an attempt to gain additional information as well as to gain a better understanding for a teacher's opinions (See Appendix B for a copy of the interview protocol).

Data Analysis

To determine the answer of the research question, "Teacher perceptions of students with moderate to severe disabilities in non-academic (elective) courses," a variety of methods to analyze data were used. First, all of the interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded. Once the data had been coded, common themes found throughout the data were identified and analyzed using a classroom to classroom, and teacher to teacher approach. Finally, this was concluded with an interpretation of the data by each individual theme and as a whole.

Coding

Data from the teacher interviews were organized and coded. The data was coded based on the reoccurring themes discussed by the teachers who participated in the data collection process as well as by anticipated themes that emerged through a review of the literature. The data was coded into the following categories: paraprofessional supports, teacher training, impact on general education students, social benefits, student accommodations, teacher concerns, and teacher perceptions of the inclusion model.

Themes

Once the data had been coded, common themes found in the interviews were pulled out. These common themes were: teacher dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the inclusion program, the social impact inclusion has on students with disabilities, supports provided to both students and teachers, teacher training, and the impact inclusion has on students in the general education setting.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the perspectives of general education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities within their non-academic (elective) courses. To answer this question five teachers working in this scenario were selected and interviewed. The teachers interviewed for this research were serving in the following classrooms: art, sculpture/design, woodshop, and ceramics. These teachers were interviewed one-on-one in an attempt to learn more about their perceptions of inclusion.

As a result of the interview process, a list of research interests was created during the data coding process. This list included: student safety, development of friendships that extend outside of the classroom, student ratio (special education students per class), and grading. From analysis of the data, these seven themes emerged: 1) Paraprofessional Supports within the classroom, 2) Teacher Training, 3) Impact on general education students, 4) Social benefits, 5) Student accommodations, 6) Teacher concerns, and 7) Teacher perceptions of the inclusion process.

Paraprofessional Support

The role of a paraprofessional varies from place to place. In this context, the paraprofessional is an individual who is trained to support in the classroom instruction of students with disabilities. The general education teachers interviewed during the research process noted that they were currently receiving or had received paraprofessional support within their classroom when students with disabilities were being included. All of the five teachers felt that they receive sufficient support in the classroom with the addition of a paraprofessional.

One teacher stated, “One of the supports is to have an adult paraprofessional and I have had that fairly consistently over the last four years.” Another teacher added, “I have really good paraprofessional support. I have one paraprofessional in particular that is a great support in my classroom. The general consensus among the teachers interviewed was that paraprofessional support in the classroom is very helpful in the process of inclusion.

Two of the teachers mentioned that paraprofessional support within the classroom was also optional. As a teacher went on to explain during the interview, “If I have less than four students with disabilities they offer me an aide but I can handle them on my own. But of course, it depends on the student.” A second teacher added, “It depends on the number of students. I believe if I have 4 or more or 5 or more, generally I get an aide in the classroom.”

One teacher mentioned a second support. This teacher felt that it was also beneficial to receive a student profile for each student with a disability in the class. The teacher stated, “The other thing I like is I get the report at the beginning of the year from the special education department that gives me a profile on the individual students. That helps me understand what their language skills are and also gives me strategies on how to better work with each student.” The student profile document, which is provided to all the teachers who have students with disabilities included in their classroom. This document provides the teacher with the following information: student information, goals, academic levels, student interests, behavior strategies, and student accommodations (See Appendix B for a copy of the student profile document).

In summary, through an analysis of the data paired with the teacher responses, the teachers at this particular high school are provided with an adult paraprofessional when there are enough students who have disabilities included in their classrooms to qualify for support. In some cases, when only one or two students are being included, teachers may decline

paraprofessional support. However, most teachers graciously accept the extra support. In addition, it was also noted that teachers at this school receive a student profile for each student included in their class. The teachers felt this document helps them better understand each individual student. The teachers appreciate the teaching strategies and accommodations included in the student profile that help them work with a particular student.

Teacher Training

When asked what training they had received to better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities in the classroom the respondents had very little to report. Two of the teachers interviewed stated that they had received training in the form of staff development. One of the teachers stated, “Over the years we’ve had in-service trainings where we talk about mainstreaming, how to include students, and techniques on how to do that.” Another teacher added, “We’ve had some staff development days. That’s probably the most training I’ve had on how to work with students who have disabilities.”

Three out of the five teachers interviewed stated that they had received some formal training on how to work with students who have disabilities at the college level. One teacher elaborated on this by saying, “My college coursework has been minimal in that it was one class in particular that addressed special education.” The teacher went on to explain, “I needed to take it in order to get my credential. It was helpful but it wasn’t really extensive.” A second teacher reinforced this notion by stating, “Just the requirement for my credential sadly. That class doesn’t even touch the surface, it’s just an overview of everything possible and that’s not even what we get here.”

Four out of the five teachers interviewed credited their training primarily to on the job experience. Two teachers reported that most or all of their knowledge had been developed through on the job training.

When the teachers were asked whether they felt they had received enough training to work with students who have disabilities four out of the five teachers said that it was not sufficient. One teacher stated, “Definitely not. Staff development days touch on the surface of each topic at best. I would appreciate some formal training. I think with more in-depth training I may be able to better serve these students.” A second teacher added, “I feel that if I were better equipped with the necessary tools to do my job, it would be a win-win situation for me as well as for my students.”

On the other hand, one teacher felt the training they had received over the years was enough to effectively do the job. When asked if the training received to work with students who have disabilities this teacher responded, “I think it has been enough to get me by. All of the students I have tend to respond positively to the accommodations and instructional strategies I use in my classroom.”

Overall, the consensus of the teachers at this school is that there has not been enough training provided to the teachers to work with students who have disabilities. While teachers had reported receiving staff development training in this area, the majority of the training appeared to be obtained while on the job. The teachers made it clear that they would like to receive more training in this area so they may better serve these students in the future.

Impact on General Education Students

The third theme that emerged during the interview process was the impact inclusion has on the general education students who are in the same class as the students with disabilities.

While most of the teachers agreed that the inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities had a positive effect on the general education students, one teacher felt that there were instances where there may be a negative effect, while another felt that there is no impact at all. However, the general consensus from the teachers was that inclusion has a positive effect on the general education students.

Of the teachers who feel that inclusion has a positive impact on the general education students, several felt that it gives the students the opportunity to see what life is like in the real world. One of the teachers stated, “I think it’s wonderful. The inclusion is, I’m okay you’re okay. I know that sounds tripe but that’s the real world. Everybody has things they do well and things they don’t do well. So as a team, as a cohesive group, as a class we do it.” A second teacher added, “A lot of times I’ll have a regular education student help the special education student and they can work in pairs on certain things. That works out really well because it’s a good experience for the regular education students.”

One of the teachers stated that the inclusion process has no effect on the general education students. This teacher went on to add, “It may impact them in the fact that they pay attention. Especially my brighter, more humane students and I think they see the special education students working away with the paraprofessional.” This particular teacher felt that it was important for her general education students to see that the students with disabilities are capable of working on similar assignments.

One of the teachers interviewed stated, “Inclusion can have three possible impacts on the general education students; positive, negative, or no impact at all.” The teacher went on to explain that it all depends on the dynamic of the students in the classroom, “The higher the number of special education students, it does tend to slow down the progress of the class as a

whole....Sometimes if there are a lot of things going on with a particular student, it can be distracting to the general education students.” Finally, the teacher mentioned that one of the biggest distractions in relation to including students with moderate to severe disabilities is that the student with disabilities simply just does not want to work.

In summary, the teachers have mixed feelings when it comes to the impact on general education students. Some of the teachers feel that inclusion has a positive impact in the sense that it makes the surrounding students more aware and compassionate. While other teachers noted that at times, it can have a negative impact if the students are making a lot of noise or if they are off task. One teacher felt that there was no impact at all on the general education students. The varying degrees of opinions may be related to the structure and/or activities in each class. In the classes where there is already a lot of noise due to heavy machinery, the distractions were not mentioned by the teachers during the interview process. However, in two of the classrooms, where students generally work quietly at small tables, the teachers stated that students who are off-task and/or making distracting noises, can impact the learning of their non-disabled peers.

Social Benefits for Students with Disabilities

Among the five teachers interviewed there were mixed feelings about the social benefits of inclusion. While several of the teachers felt that inclusion had a positive effect on the students with disabilities, there were also those who were unsure of the benefits or felt that the students with disabilities were not *that* different from the general education students.

The teachers who felt that the students with disabilities benefited socially from the experience felt that inclusion was a great way for these students to mix in with the rest of the student population. One teacher reported, “I think they like to feel included with everybody else.

Mentally I think they benefit from it just because they are not isolated on their own.” A second teacher commented, “I think they see that they are not that much different.... I think they see how they can fit in the world. The students all interact with each other.”

The teachers who viewed inclusion as a socially positive experience made valid points about building self-esteem, learning social skills through modeling, and the building of social skills through interaction with one another.

There were however, teachers who were unsure of the social benefits in relationship to the inclusion process. One of the teachers stated, “It’s a tough call, it’s hard to know because they group together for the most part.” In this particular classroom, the students with disabilities often sit together in the back of the room with the paraprofessional. A second teacher brought up a very interesting point by saying, “As far as friendships are concerned, I don’t know if the friendships extend outside of the classroom, but they do definitely have friends here within the classroom.”

Largely, the teachers were all in agreement that the students with disabilities benefit socially from the inclusion process within the classroom. However, the degree to which the benefits were seen by the teachers varied from classroom to classroom. Some of the teachers felt that the students who are included gain self-confidence by seeing that they aren’t *that* different from the other students. Other teachers felt that the students develop social skills through the fostering of new friendships that may have otherwise never developed in a self-contained classroom setting. In certain situations, where the students with disabilities tend to group together, the social benefits were not quite as evident. It was also noted that whether the social relationships extended beyond the classroom was unclear. This may be partially due to the fact that teachers at the secondary level do not generally supervise students during passing periods

and/or lunch. Therefore, data on social benefits extended beyond the classroom are minimal at best.

Student Accommodations

Initially, when asked what accommodations were made for the students with moderate to severe disabilities in their classrooms, a couple of the teachers were unsure of the definition of “accommodations.” While some thought it was the same as having a paraprofessional or working one-on-one with a student, others viewed the term as actual changes to the assignments or expectations for the students. Out of the five teachers interviewed, three of the teachers referred to varieties of visual aids as accommodations. In addition, three of the teachers claim to modify the grading structure/criteria for the students with disabilities. Another accommodation that was noted during the interview process was the allotment of extra time for the students to complete assignments without receiving a late penalty.

The use of visual aids appeared to be present in at least three of the classrooms. These visual aids ranged from posters, to project boards, and also include the use of realia within the classroom. One of the teachers stated, “I use a lot of realia in my class, primarily for the English learners but also for the special education students as well.” Another teacher went on to add, “I have posters up on the wall where there are actual drawings of the steps to completing a project as well as written directions of those same things.”

A modified grading criterion was mentioned as a means of accommodations for the students with disabilities. Teachers discussed the notion of grading the students on a separate rubric of their own. Based on the individual unique abilities, the student would be graded on the outcome of the assignment paired with the amount of effort taken to complete it. One teacher stated, “If I have a list of ten criteria for a project, I might bring it down to five or three based on

the student and their capabilities.” Another teacher went on to add, “All of the students are graded on the same grading structure however, it is primarily based on whether or not I feel the student is working to their potential.

Many of the teachers interviewed referred to the fact that it may often take the students with disabilities additional time to complete a given assignment. However, all of the teachers were in agreement that extra time is often needed for these students as they are not as fast as their general education peers at times. One teacher commented, “I also give the students more time and I don’t expect them to be at the same level. They are at their own level, they are running their own race, and they don’t have to race against someone who is at the AP (advanced placement) level.”

In summary, a wide array of accommodations was mentioned by the teachers. The accommodations included: modified assignments, modified grading, visual aids, as well as extra time to complete assignments. Though not all of the listed accommodations were used in every classroom, teachers consistently implemented 2-3 of these in each of their classrooms. Overall, the teachers at this school appeared to be very knowledgeable in the area of student accommodations and believe that the strategies used within their classrooms are effective tools to use in the educating of students with disabilities.

Teacher Concerns

A reoccurring theme that seemed to be in the minds of several of the teachers interviewed was the issue of safety. In many circumstances students are required to work with heavy machinery and in some instances, even fire. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that safety would be a main concern for these teachers. One teacher stated, “I’m concerned that they might be a safety risk at times to themselves or other students.” A similar concern was addressed

by another teacher who said, “Probably the most dangerous place in the whole school is in my classroom [woodshop], so I’m really concerned that everybody is aware of what they’re doing because we all get careless.

Another concern made evident during the interview process with the issue of the number of students with disabilities within a particular class. This is a concern for the teachers because the inclusion of too many students in one particular class, especially without the proper supports, can lead to many difficulties. One teacher commented, “Just keep the balance. If the balance is kept and I have 2-3 students I can work with it’s a good balance.” Similarly, a second teacher went on to add, “Depending on the number of students I have in each group, and the dynamic of those personalities together, it is always a little bit different.” This notion was reinforced by a third teacher who stated, “That’s my only concern about inclusion. That we’re not going to put somebody into an environment that’s going to be unsafe.”

To sum it up, teachers at this particular school seemed to only have two primary concerns with regards to the inclusion process. The first was student safety. Teachers want to make sure that students included in their classrooms are not going to get hurt. The second concern addressed by the teachers was student quantity. While the teachers do not appear to have a problem having students with disabilities in their classrooms, they are worried about having too many of these students due to safety and classroom management concerns.

Inclusion Model

The overall response from the teachers during the interview process was positive in regards to the perception of inclusion. Teachers thought that overall, it is a good idea. Teachers felt that inclusion is the perfect opportunity to allow students with disabilities the chance to participate in activities that are the same as their non-disabled peers. It was noted by one of the

teachers that the element of competition is taken out of the equation for these particular students. The teacher stated, "They do not have to compete with others if they do not have the skills or the development to complete a project at the same level." A second teacher added, "The process works well and allows the students to have a good experience in a class which affords them the opportunity to try something that all the other students are getting to do."

In summary, the teachers at this particular high school perceive the inclusion process as a positive element to the education of students with disabilities as a whole. This may be partially due to the fact that these teachers are provided with excellent support from the special education department in the form of paraprofessionals. As previously noted, the teachers are also well prepared in the area of student accommodations. The teacher perceptions of inclusion may also be attributed to the years of experience that each of the interviewed teachers have in the educating of students with disabilities. Nearly all of the teachers interviewed are veteran teachers who have worked with students who have disabilities for many years. Overall, the perceptions of the inclusion process from the teachers at this school are highly positive.

Summary

The previous section listed and discussed the seven themes which emerged during the data coding process: 1) Paraprofessional Supports within the classroom, 2) Teacher Training, 3) Impact on general education students, 4) Social benefits, 5) Student accommodations, 6) Teacher concerns, and 7) Teacher perceptions of the inclusion process.

Throughout the interview process it was determined that perceptions on inclusion varied from teacher to teacher. In each of the discussed themes, teachers offered insight into both the positive and negative aspects of the inclusion process. In each theme the teachers explained their

concerns in relationship to including students with disabilities. The teachers gave compelling reasons/arguments to explain their view on each of the matters.

After an analysis of the data collected during the interview process, along with an in-depth look at each of the seven emerging themes, it appears that the teachers at this particular high school, who have students with disabilities included in their classrooms, maintain an overall positive perception of the inclusion process. Data to support this finding are found in each of the interviews conducted. Sample comments include, “I like it...I think it’s a good idea,” along with, “I think inclusion is an absolutely wonderful idea.” It was mentioned, “The process works well and allows the student to have a good experience in a class which affords them the opportunity to try something that all the other students are getting to do.” Throughout the majority of the interview process, the general education teachers expressed satisfaction with the inclusion program.

While the teachers had primarily positive things to say about the inclusion process, there were several reasonable issues discussed as well. First, there were teachers concerned with student safety. Several of the elective courses require students to operate dangerous equipment. Therefore it is a reasonable concern. Second, teachers were concerned with the amount of students who have disabilities being placed within a particular class. Teachers fear that having too many of these students may be a distraction and/or change the dynamic of the classroom. A third concern addressed by the teachers was the issue of grading. Some teachers felt there has not been a lot of guidance from the special education department in the area of grading criteria for students with disabilities. Lastly, a majority of the teachers felt they have not received adequate training to properly work with students who have disabilities. Most teachers reported receiving primarily on the job training and/or completing the mandatory class at the college level needed to

get their credential.

Chapter 5: Summary

Prior to the collection of data, a review of the literature suggested that, Special educators ranked resistance from general educators as one of the primary barriers for placing students in general education environments” (Angran et al., 2002). It was also stated that General education teachers faced for the first time with the prospect of integrating a student having a moderate or severe disability into their classrooms will naturally respond with a bit of resistance. However, the data collected for the purpose of this project displayed the opposite. In fact, all of the teachers who were interviewed stated that inclusion is a great idea. The teachers went on to stress the importance of broadening the education of students with special needs. It was also noted that inclusion is an important concept for humanity as a whole through the exposure of these individuals to their typically developing peers.

Though a defining reason for the differing results is not clear, I feel they may be in direct relation to the types of classes in this study (elective versus core academics). It is very possible that if research were to be collected from teachers of core content area classes at the same high school, that the results may be more in line with those observed in prior inclusion studies in regards to resistance from general education teachers.

Throughout the interview process the general education teachers who participated in the research maintained a relatively positive outlook on the inclusion process as a whole. There were, of course, issues addressed in several of the themes that were of reasonable concern. These issues included: Student safety, teacher supports, the quantity of students with special

needs being added to a class, the modifications/grading of students with disabilities who are being included in a general education class, and teacher training.

Student safety is a reasonable concern, especially in classes involving the operation of dangerous equipment. This issue did not surface during the review of the literature specifically; however it can be connected to the issue of support. One problem facing inclusion is that many students with moderate to severe disabilities enter the general education setting without adequate levels of support. The literature on the topic of support stated, “General education teachers have expressed compelling concerns over insufficient supports to sustain students with disabilities in their classrooms” (Angran et al., 2002, p. 128). Without the proper staffing in a particular class, especially a class which requires the operation of heavy machinery, a general education teacher would find it difficult to maintain the safety of all students within the classroom. Therefore, as discovered in the literature review, “it seems clear that many teachers have reservations or concerns about inclusion and believe that substantial supports are necessary to enable these efforts to succeed. The ultimate success of mainstreaming/inclusion efforts, then, may well depend on the extent to which such supports are made available” (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996, p. 71).

A second issue unveiled during the interview process was the issue of the “quantity” of students with disabilities to be placed within a particular class. A couple of the teachers stated that the “dynamic” of the class can change dramatically depending on the number of students with disabilities who are added. Secondly, one of the teachers noted that sometimes having too many students with disabilities within a class can lead to extra distraction and/or slow down the pace of the class as a whole.

The third primary concern of the teachers was the issue of modifying assignments and assigning grades to the students with disabilities. While it was mentioned that assignments and grades are modified for these particular students, it was also stated that some teachers would like more support in this area. The current procedure, or assumption, at the school is that the teachers will automatically make the necessary adjustments to the student work and grading structures. There has been no official protocol and/or training implemented to assist the teachers with this particular issue.

Though teacher training was not seen as an issue by the teachers in this study, it is important to reiterate its importance. As noted in the literature review, “Unlike special educators, general educators are not trained to work intensely with one individual or a small group of individuals” (Zigmond, 2003, p. 197). It was also stated, “Research shows that when general education teachers received assistance in mastering the skills required to implement an innovation such as inclusion, they became more committed to the change as their effort and skill increased” (Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995, p. 425). When the teachers were asked what formal training they had received to teach students who have disabilities the responses were minimal. A couple teachers mentioned some staff developments along with the mandatory class during the credential process. However, the most common response simply referred to on the job training.

Implications

The data suggests that the high school used for the purpose of this study, appears to be properly implementing its inclusion program. There were however a couple of areas that may benefit from additional support at the school level. First, the school may consider the implementation of a training program for teachers working with students who have disabilities.

Proper training will provide teachers with the necessary tools needed to educate individuals with disabilities in the future. Second, the school may benefit from the development of safety protocols to be used in classrooms where dangerous equipment is being utilized. Lastly, the school, along with its staff, should discuss the ratios to which students with disabilities are included within a particular class.

Surrounding schools and districts looking to implement effective inclusion programs may also use this data in the beginning stages of their implementation process. The views and concerns of the teachers involved in this particular study address relevant concerns paired with program successes. Surrounding areas may be able to address these concerns prior to program implementation which may lead to a smoother transition for the school, students, and staff as a whole.

Recommendations

Further research can be done on this topic. Research including a larger sample of participants may be conducted to gain a more clear perspective on the overall perceptions of teachers towards the inclusion process. Additional research may also be conducted in the future to determine if a change of teacher perceptions occurs after the suggested steps for improvement have been implemented. Research may also be conducted that will follow this program as it extends into the core content area classes throughout the school as well.

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Appendix A

Interview #1

Date: 3-18-2011

Teacher ID: A

(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?

Response:

I like it. You know, I think it's a good idea. I'm always concerned in my particular kind of class that the students I receive are going to be able to function safely in the class. That's my only concern about inclusion. That we're not going to put somebody into an environment that's going to be unsafe. But I like it. The special ed kids I usually have aren't any problem.

2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Response:

Well, in the one period where I actually have the most special education kids I have a special education para for that particular class. So she kind of focuses on their needs more than I do which makes it a lot easier in that respect. The other thing I like is I get the report at the beginning of the year from the special education department that gives me a profile on the individual students. That helps me understand what their language skills are and also gives me strategies on how to better work with each kid.

3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?

Response:

We've had some staff development days. That's probably the most training I've had on how to work with students who have disabilities.

Do you feel the training you have received is enough?

Response:

Definitely not. Staff development days touch on the surface of each topic at best. I would appreciate some formal training. I think with more in-depth training I may be able to better serve these students.

4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?

Response:

Most of my class is in the lab. That means it allows students to proceed at their own pace. So, kids that are a little more advanced tend to go faster, and kids that aren't go a little slower. You know it does require some of my time but since I do have a para, I have one para all of the time

and two paras some of the time, which certainly contributes to the success of the special ed students.

5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?

Response:

I think they like to feel included with everybody else. Mentally I think they benefit from it just because they are not isolated on their own. They get to interact with everybody else. Quite obviously I don't even know if all of the kids even know who the special education kids are. I think they just kind of integrate in.

6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Response:

I use a lot of realia in my class, primarily for the English language learners but also for the special education students as well. When we do a project I make all of the pieces ahead of time and I mount them all on a board. So they go up to the board and they can see each piece of the project with all the cuts on it. So, whether it's an English learning problem or a special ed kid, when they're confused about something I point them over there and they can see what it is they are going to make. That actually helps everybody. I let the students proceed at their own pace. I tell the students that I'm concerned with how much they get done, I'm only concerned with the

quality of the work. I think that the special ed kids don't accomplish as much sometimes. It depends a little bit about who we're talking about. Some kids actually accomplish more and that's because they are really focused sometimes on what they're doing. They really like the lab time. They really like the chance to do that. Overall, I just like to make sure they understand what they are doing and make sure they get a lot of visual instruction. I demonstrate all of the projects to the class and sometimes to individual students as well. All of the students are on the same grading structure however, it is primarily based on whether or not I feel the student is working to their potential.

7. Additional Comments/Concerns:

Response:

My only concern is that I've had some special education kids that were, you know, really a problem. These kids had to have special help like a one on one para. I had two of them last year with one on one paras. If I didn't have those paras I would have had to eliminate them because they were not safe in the lab by themselves. But with the paras they were fine. Probably the most dangerous place in the whole school is right here, so I'm really concerned that everybody's aware of what they're doing because we all get careless.

Interview #2

Date: 3-2-2011

Teacher ID: B

(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?

Response:

For my particular subject, it's absolutely wonderful. It's a great avenue. I tier my classes and curriculum so they can earn an A on their own. They do not have to compete with others if they do not have the skills or the development to complete a project at the same level.

2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Response:

If I have enough sped kids, I think its four or more, it's a little bit much for me, especially if the disabilities are physical. If that is the case I get an aid in the classroom. I had one a couple of years ago and it was wonderful. We work as a team. If I have less than 4 students with disabilities they offer me an aid but I can handle them on my own. But of course, it depends on the student.

3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?

Response:

I haven't had any training. I think it would be beneficial. I've had to learn everything simply by on the job training.

4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?

Response:

I think it's wonderful. The inclusion is, I'm ok you're ok, I know that sounds tripe but that's the real world. Everybody has things that they do well and things that they don't do well so as a team, as a cohesive group, as a class we do it. I don't take any time away from the general education students to help the sped kids; I try and keep it even. However, with our class sizes increasing to 38:1, I think that will make it more difficult for me to spread out my attention. It will be a real setback. But if you have no more than 30 students, with 5 being special ed, I think you have enough time. Especially with the block schedule. If it was just an hour class I wouldn't get to everybody.

5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?

Response:

I think they see that they are not that much different. They have special skills. Possibly not enough skills in some areas. But I think they see how they can fit in the world. The students all interact with each other. We tend to think our other students are going to ostracize them but they don't, it's fun.

6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Response:

I use a different grading structure for the sped kids in the classroom. For assignments there is a different rubric. I also give the students more time and I don't expect them to be at the same level. They're at their own level, they're running their own race, they don't have to race against someone who is at the AP (advanced placement) level.

7. Additional Comments/Concerns:

Response:

I think in some areas, like mine, it's a plus. But I think if you're going to put them in a mainstream core class, it might be frustrating for them.

Interview #3

Date: 3-21-2011

Teacher ID: C

(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?

Response:

Currently I've worked for about thirty years in electives type classes in California and I've noticed that the support system has been there for special ed classes as far as inclusion.

Depending on the number of student I have in each group, and the dynamic of those personalities together, it always is a little bit different. The process works well and allows the student to have a good experience in a class which affords them the opportunity to try something that all the other students are getting to do.

2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Response:

One of the supports is to have an adult paraprofessional and I have had that fairly consistently over the last four years. Prior to that, I don't know if the money wasn't there, or if I just didn't have enough of the special needs kids in my class to justify having a paraprofessional. The other supports I use, which are internal supports, are posted directions and techniques for projects on the wall. I also demonstrate each object. The other support is cooperative learning. The student

sits at a group of six students and they're generally making similar products and can support each other through cooperative learning. I will also sometimes select students to buddy with the special needs student and give individual help.

3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?

Response:

I've had a ton of on the job training in terms of teaching several different kinds of classes. A couple of years ago I also completed my CLAD credential which helps in the instruction of English language learners. However, most of those strategies can be carried over to aid in the instructions of students with disabilities. Over the years we've also had in-service trainings where we talk about mainstreaming, how to include students, and techniques on how to do that.

Overall, do you feel this has been enough training to prepare you to work with students who have disabilities?

Response:

I think it has been enough to get me by. All of the students I have tend to respond positively to the accommodations and instructional strategies I use in my classroom. I think so.

4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?

Response:

It can have three different outcomes. Negative, positive, or no effect. And it refers back to what I said before about how many special needs students are in the particular class along with the dynamic of those students. The higher the number of special ed students, it does tend to slow down the progress of the class as a whole at times. If there are a lot of things going on with a particular student, it can be distracting to the general ed kids. One of the main distractions I often see is a student that just doesn't want to work. But I think a lot of that has to do with the fact they don't have the confidence within themselves to complete the project. So one strategy I use is to talk to them separately and say that I notice you're not working, I'd love to help you get started, what can I do to help you start, and ask how they are feeling about the project. Then I like to break it down into small parts and give the students short-time goals.

5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?

Response:

It's a great ego builder for the sped kids to have success in something. Especially in my class where it's a new thing that they've never tried. By completing a project it gives them a feeling of accomplishment which is great for their self-esteem. Through this hopefully we can get them to be life-long learners. I've had several students over the years who have really clicked in the class

and have repeated it multiple times for credit. They have become great students and even great helpers for other people.

6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Response:

One of the accommodations, as I previously mentioned are the posters I have up on the wall. Where there are actually drawings of the steps to completing a project as well as written directions of those same things. That accommodation is a reminder support for someone who is working on something and they're having trouble. If I have a large class and I don't have 3 minutes to sit and explain something I'll point at the poster and say "see poster A? read steps 1-4 and that should put you back on the right track." Once again, another support is to actually demonstrate the project to the class.

7. Additional Comments/Concerns:

Response:

Overall, I see inclusion as a positive experience because it's the way the real world works. The students have to function in the general society when they are older so it's a great learning experience for them to experience these types of things.

Interview #4

Date: 3-18-2011

Teacher ID: D

(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?

Response:

I feel good about it. I feel it's necessary and good for humanity as a whole because I think in young people they need to see how other young people are. I just think it makes for a healthier society.

2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Response:

I have really good para support. I have one para in particular that is a great support in my classroom. Also, the department chair of special education here has been very helpful. Actually, any person involved in special education at this school has been extremely supportive.

3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?

Response:

I have had no training in the area of staff development. My college coursework has been minimal in that it was one class in particular that addressed special education. I needed to take it in order to get my credential. It was helpful. But it wasn't really extensive. I wouldn't say that I'm at all knowledgeable in the area of special education. Most of my knowledge has been developed through on the job training.

4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?

Response:

It doesn't impact them at all. Impact seems to be a negative connotation. It may impact them in the fact that they pay attention. Especially my brighter, more humane students and I think they see the sped kids with the paraprofessional working away too. I think that my kids who are firing on all four cylinders, that are humane, and are decent young adults I think it is a very positive experience.

5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?

Response:

That's a tough call. It's hard to know because they group together for the most part. Let me think about this. I think it's probably, although they do prefer to sit with each other, there are a couple kids who don't and I think it's a good thing for those kids who "pass." With the more severe kids who like to group together, I don't know how that helps them socially. They're quiet and they're sweet by and large. For the more aggressive students, I have one in particular, I think it just agitates him.

6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Response:

I have great paraprofessional support. And these kids a lot of the times need one on one assistance and I'm always willing to work with them. I will demonstrate something with them that I have already demonstrated to the class as a whole. But with these kids I'll take them aside and do it as often as they need and discuss it with them at length. I will even modify the actual assignments for these students. I will make provisions for them. A lot of times they can't quite grasp the entire project parameters so I see what they're capable of doing on an individual basis. Some of the kids are capable of things that others aren't. With grading I am always unsure of what to do. I'd like to get more support in this area. It's a holistic thing and I have to consider this one kid's abilities. So say I've got a regular kid and I've got one of my sped kids. I see how hard the sped student tries, because some of them don't try, so I have to consider it holistically

and that's all I can do. So I do modify grades for these kids but if I had more support in this area that would be helpful.

7. Additional Comments/Concerns:

Response:

I like having the sped kids in the class. They are by and large sweet kids. They are tender human beings. Some of them aren't, but I do have para support. There is the occasional kid that is very thorny. I'm concerned that some of these kids have disabilities that are emotional and I'm concerned that they might be a safety risk at times to themselves or other students they may pull off task. That's a concern. But by and large my experience with the sped students has been very positive. I enjoy having them in my class and they seem to, for the most part, really enjoy it. Not every kid, but the ones that do, they love working with their hands.

Interview #5

Date: 3-21-2011

Teacher ID: E

(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?

Response:

I think inclusion is an absolutely wonderful idea. If it's a regular class I think it's usually overfilled with students who most often have problems themselves. A good mixture is a class with 30-32 regular students and 2-3 special needs students is perfect.

2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Response:

It depends on the number of students. I believe if I have 4 or more or 5 or more, generally I get an aid in the classroom. I haven't had an aid for a couple of years now because for some reason I haven't had a lot of special needs kids. That's basically it. Part of it is on me to though, if I want special ed teachers to help me then I can ask them for help but a lot of times I don't have time to do that.

3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?

Response:

Mainstreaming? To complete the credential and that's it. Just the requirement for my credential sadly. That class doesn't even touch the surface, it's just an overview of everything possible and that's not even what we get here. Most of my training has been on the job training within my classroom trying different methods and strategies on my own. I haven't received any staff development or additional training otherwise.

Do you feel the training you have received is enough to prepare you to teach students with disabilities?

Response:

Certainly not. I feel that if I were better equipped with the necessary tools to do my job, it would be a win-win situation for myself as well as for my students.

4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?

Response:

If it's a regular classroom situation where I'm not filled up with a lot of freshman and it's a good balance and I don't have too many special needs kids, it doesn't impact negatively at all. In fact

what I'll do a lot of times is I'll have a regular ed student help the special ed student and they can work in pairs that way on certain things. And that works out really well because it's a good experience for the regular ed students. I don't feel like it takes away from the learning of anyone else by having special ed kids in my class.

5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?

Response:

Hugely. Hugely. You know, cause this is real world stuff here. And they get to see how regular ed students interact with each other, interact with me, what the expectations are, and that's not going to happen when they are encapsulated in their own little world. I mean, they're not part of the rest of the world in that situation. As far as friendships are concerned, I don't know if the friendships extend outside of the classroom, but they definitely have friendships here within the classroom. I had a student for about three years who had a social disability and he learned a lot about how to interact with the other kids in the class over the course of his time in here. They got to know each other on a first name basis, they joked with each other, so I think it was really helpful for him.

6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Response:

I definitely modify the work. So if I have for example, a list of 10 criteria for a project, I might bring it down to 5 or 3 based on the student and their capabilities. Hopefully I get the chance to know them a little bit more so I can push them just a little bit. But that doesn't happen right away, it takes a while for me to really understand each kid on an individual basis. One thing that I do feel is that in the advance class, I would prefer not to have special needs kids in that class because then they would get lost because we are so accelerated. But like I said, I was able to have this one student in my beginning class 3 times and I was able to give him different things or he would do the same thing as the year before but in a different way. In the beginning class I do a lot more focused work with my students and in the advanced class the students are more on their own.

7. Additional Comments/Concerns:

Response:

Just keep the balance. If the balance is kept and I have 2-3 students I can work with it's a good balance. Although, I was just thinking, one year I had 8 special needs kids in a particular class with a paraprofessional with whom I worked with closely, and it was one of the best classes I ever had. We had 8 of these students and so in that situation it worked out really well. We modified a lot because we had so many students. My paraprofessional was very knowledgeable and able to help me tremendously in modifying the work.

Appendix B

STUDENT PROFILE

The student named below receives special education services and is enrolled in your_____ period class.

STUDENT NAME:
PARENT/GUARDIAN:

GR:
PHONE:

PRIMARY DISABILITY:
CASE MANAGER:EXTENSION:

HEALTH/MEDICAL CONCERNS: GLASSES: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO HEARING AIDE <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLAN <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (SEE ATTACHED)	ELL: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> RE-DES CELDT SCORES: 20____ OA____ L____ S____ R____ W____
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<p style="text-align: center;">READING</p> <p>Grade Level:</p> <p>Goal:</p> <p>:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WRITING</p> <p>Grade Level:</p> <p>Goal:</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">MATH</p> <p>Grade Level:</p> <p>Goal:</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">STUDENT INFORMATION</p> <p>STRENGTHS:</p> <p>NEEDS:</p> <p>LEARNING PREFERENCES:</p> <p>GRADING: (See Alternative Grading Procedures)</p> <p>CONCERNS:</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">RECOMMENDATIONS for ACCOMMODATIONS, MODIFICATIONS and/or IEP GOALS</p>
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Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Teacher ID: _____
(Researcher will complete)

1. How do you perceive the inclusion process?
2. What supports do you receive in your classroom to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities?
3. What training have you received to help you better serve students with moderate to severe disabilities within your classroom?
4. How does the inclusion of students with special needs in your classroom impact the learning of the general education students who are in the same class?
5. How do the students with special needs who are mainstreamed in your class benefit socially from the experience?
6. What accommodations are provided for the students with special needs in your classroom?

Additional Comments/Concerns: